

NATURE, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND FREQUENCY OF SUICIDE INCIDENTS IN THE NSUKKA UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This study titled "Assessment of Social and Cultural Factors Predisposing Individuals to Suicide in the Nsukka University Community" examines the complex interplay of sociocultural dynamics contributing to suicidal behavior among students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). Suicide, a significant global public health issue, is particularly critical in university environments due to the unique pressures faced by students. This research addresses a gap in existing studies by focusing specifically on the Nigerian university context. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, the study gathered quantitative data from 611 respondents through a multi-stage sampling technique and qualitative data from in-depth interviews with university staff. The findings reveal that relationship breakups (30.6%), loss of loved ones (30.4%), and social stigma (18.1%) are prominent social factors predisposing individuals to suicide in the Nsukka community. Cultural stigma and religious beliefs significantly deter individuals from seeking help, exacerbating feelings of isolation and hopelessness. The study also highlights the profound emotional and social impacts of suicide, including anger (57.3%), depression (36.8%), and social withdrawal among the victim's close associates. Female freshmen and male senior students are identified as the most common victims, influenced by factors such as poor communication, sexual abuse, and academic stress. The research underscores the need for targeted interventions, recommending the establishment of comprehensive mental health services, educational programs to reduce cultural and religious stigma, and the integration of stress management training into the university curriculum. These measures aim to address the specific challenges faced by the Nsukka University community, ultimately contributing to the prevention of suicide and the improvement of student well-being.

Background of the Study

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Globally, suicide is recognized as a major public health issue, with approximately 800,000 deaths annually and many more attempts (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017). The transition from suicidal thoughts and attempts to actual suicide can often be sudden and impulsive, driven by complex interactions between various factors (Bilsen, 2018). The multifaceted nature of suicide encompasses elements such as neurobiology, personal and family history, stressful life events, and sociocultural influences (Turecki & Brent, 2016). Understanding these factors within the specific context of the Nsukka University community is crucial for developing effective interventions.

In many parts of the world, including Nigeria, the criminalization and stigmatization of suicide further complicate efforts to understand and address this issue. In Nigeria, suicide is not only seen as a sin in many religious contexts but is also a criminal act, punishable by law (Lawal, 2018). This dual layer of stigma can discourage individuals from seeking help and can lead to significant underreporting of both attempts and completed suicides.

The methods and patterns of suicide vary globally, influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. Hanging is the most common method in many countries, while firearm suicides are prevalent in the United States and certain other regions (Ajdacic-Gross et al., 2008). In Nigeria, the choice of method often depends on availability and perceived effectiveness, with men typically opting for more violent means such as hanging or firearms, and women often choosing less violent methods like poisoning (Offia & Obiorah, 2014).

Suicide rates and methods also reflect broader social issues. For instance, economic recessions and high unemployment rates have been linked to increased suicide rates, highlighting the impact of economic stress on mental health (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). Understanding these broader patterns is essential for contextualizing the specific dynamics within the Nsukka University community.

University students are a particularly vulnerable demographic for suicidal behavior due to the unique pressures they face. Academic stress, social isolation, and mental health issues are common challenges that can significantly impact students' well-being (Wilcox et al., 2010). Studies in the United States have shown high rates of suicidal ideation and attempts among college students, with approximately 1,100 suicides annually among students aged 18-24 (Rodríguez & Huertas, 2013).

In Nigeria, detailed statistics on suicide within university communities are sparse. However, available data suggests that the pressures of university life, coupled with broader sociocultural factors, can contribute to high rates of suicidal behavior. The University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), like other academic institutions, provides a unique environment where these dynamics can be studied in detail. Understanding the nature, demographics, and frequency of suicide incidents within this community is essential for developing targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research on suicide globally, there is a dearth of studies focused on the sociocultural factors associated with suicide in Nigerian University communities. Existing research in Nigeria primarily addresses suicide in the general population, with limited focus on university students. The university environment presents unique stressors, including academic pressures and social integration challenges, which contribute to the mental health struggles of students. Notably, incidents of suicide among students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) have highlighted the urgent need for targeted research and interventions.

The researcher's personal experience as a postgraduate student at UNN, witnessing multiple suicide incidents, underscores the importance of understanding the underlying causes of these tragedies. Previous studies have identified various risk factors for suicide among university students, including depression, substance use, interpersonal conflicts, and academic stress (Okoedion & Okolie, 2019; Nyorere, James, & Udom, 2020).

However, specific data on the Nsukka University community is lacking, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into the sociocultural factors influencing suicide in this context.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to address the identified research gaps by focusing on three key objectives:

1. To find out the nature of suicide in the Nsukka University community
2. To ascertain the categories of persons more prone to suicide in the Nsukka University community
3. To investigate the rate at which incidents of suicide occur in the Nsukka University community

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of suicide in Nsukka university community?
2. What categories of persons are more prone to suicide in Nsukka university community?
3. What is the rate at which incidents of suicide occur in Nsukka university community?

Review of Literature

Suicide

Suicide is defined as a fatal self-injurious act with some evidence of intent to die (Turecki & Brent, 2016). The intent of suicidal behavior, whether consciously or unconsciously motivated, is to permanently end one's life (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). However, "Assisted suicide" which occurs when a physician helps a terminally ill person to die, avoiding an imminent, inevitable and potentially painful decline, is not of interest to this study. An online source defined suicide as taking of one's own life - a death that happens when someone harms themselves because they want to end their life (<https://medlineplus.gov/suicide.html>). A situation where someone tries to end their life but do not die is a suicide attempt.

Every culture throughout history has adopted its own view of suicidal behavior. Whereas some cultures such as the Chinese and the Japanese have at times regarded suicide as honorable, especially within a military context, and have supported and encouraged such behavior (Shearer, 2005), others such as Nigeria, have strongly opposed and condemned it (Lawal, 2018). Medline (2021) noted that, suicide does not discriminate; it can touch anyone, anywhere, at any time. Suicidal feelings and impulses sometimes co-occur with homicidal (that is, murderous) feelings and impulses (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021), this is because some people who feel that life is not worth living also come to feel that others' lives should not continue either, thus, such people may then decide to end the lives of other people prior to or along with killing themselves. The authors further noted that, motivations behind suicide-homicide events can include a desire to punish some person (or people), or gain revenge over those who have caused intolerable pain to the suicidal individual. Such events may be motivated by religious beliefs or by military orders. Some examples include; suicide bombings, joint, cult suicide, school or workplace massacres (Olatunji, 2015).

Factors that can contribute to the risk of suicide, include: having attempted suicide before, depression and other mental health disorders, alcohol or drug use disorder, family history of a mental health disorder, family history of an alcohol or drug use disorder, family history of suicide, family violence, including physical or sexual abuse, having guns in the home, being in or having recently gotten out of prison or jail, being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as a family member, peer, or celebrity, medical illness, including chronic pain, stressful life event, such as a job loss, financial problems, loss of a loved one, a breakup of a relationship, etc (Medline, 2021).

Suicidal acts are distinct from other self-harming, self-injurious, or para-suicidal acts and gestures which are also deliberate, but not intended to cause death (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). Self-injurious acts include cutting or burning oneself and other injuries or ordeal incurred during initiation into cult or fraternity group, or military and paramilitary trainings. The intention sometime is a demonstration of toughness or the socialization into the tough or hard life. However, self-injurious behaviors may lead to accidental suicide if they are taken too far, but their initial intent and goal are not suicidal (Reiss & Dombeck, 2021). According to Reiss and Dombeck, although self-injurious behavior is not suicidal behavior, it is not exactly healthy behavior either.

Durkheim classified suicide into four on the basis of different types of relationship between the actor and his society. They are; Egoistic suicide - the suicide of self-centred person who lacks altruistic feelings and is usually cut off from main stream of the society. Altruistic suicide - occurs when individuals and the group are too close and intimate. In other words, it results from the over integration of the individual into social proof. Anomic suicide – results due to certain breakdown of social equilibrium, like war or social disorganization. Fatalistic suicide - occurs due to overregulation in society; such as suicide by a servant or slave (Perfetti, 2018).

Empirical Review

Using the interview method, Igwe et al (2013) conducted a study entitled, “Factors associated with depression and suicide among patients with diabetes mellitus and essential hypertension in a Nigerian teaching hospital”. The study was carried out at the endocrinology and cardiology clinics of University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Enugu. The authors found that, proportionally, subjects with essential hypertension exhibited suicidal ideation, plan and attempt (7.8%), compared to the subjects with diabetes mellitus (6.3%). However, suicidal risk was higher in patients with diabetes mellitus (Igwe, et al, 2013).

Alabi, Alabi, Ayinde and Abdulmalik (2014) in their study, “Suicide and suicidal behaviours in Nigeria: A review” stated that, there is paucity of information as regards the incidence of suicide and suicidal behaviours in Nigeria. Thus, incidents of suicide is grossly underreported in Nigeria; a phenomenon which was attributed to lack of meaningful records of deaths and their causes in developing countries (Alabi, Alabi, Ayinde & Abdulmalik, 2014). In light of the foregoing, the authors concluded that improvement in the mortality records that specifies the causes of death should be ensured at all levels of care.

In a 10-year retrospective study of suicide cases reported to the Coroner in Rivers and Abia states of Nigeria, Offia and Obiorah (2014) set out with the objective to determine the pattern of suicide cases with respect to age, sex, and methods employed. They found that, the commonest method of committing suicide in the Niger-Delta is by hanging. However, the choice of how to die by the victim depends on the most available and the most convenient pattern at hand (Offia & Obiorah, 2014).

Gureje et al (2007) in a study seeking the correlation of suicide behaviours and mental well-being, using face-to-face interview, found that; mental disorders, especially mood disorders, were significant correlates of suicide-related outcomes. In their words, about 0.7% of the general Nigeria population had attempted suicide at some time in their lifetime, while 3.2% had thought of suicide and 1.0% had made a plan. It was also observed that women were less likely than men to make a plan following suicidal ideations; this is attributed to cultural factors which deter women or social forces which induce men (Gureje et al, 2007).

In a cross sectional survey research conducted among university students in South Eastern States of Nigeria, Nyorere, James and Udom (2020), set out with the objective to determine the relationship between personal-psycho characteristics and attitude towards suicidal behaviour among University students in South Eastern States of Nigeria. They found that, there is a very high positive and significant relationship between self-esteem, depression and attitude towards suicidal behaviour among university students. Thus, the authors while

maintaining that student suicidal behaviour is seen as the most serious and public health problem affecting the Nigerian society, concludes that, among other factors predisposing students to suicide, lower self-esteem and depression are strong psycho-personal variables encouraging suicidal behaviour among students (Nyorere, James & Udom, 2020). The authors therefore recommend that University counselors should always counsel the students about upholding self-worth, maintaining confidence and positive view of themselves in their academic and social life pursuits; as this will deter the students from committing suicide when confronted with strenuous conditions. In a qualitative study carried out in Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Enugu, conducted in Enugu state, using interview method, Ohayi (2019) set out with the aim to highlight the perception and attitude of survivors to suicide in their environment. He found that, there were 8 cases of suspected suicide over a 7-year period accounting for 0.6% of all violent deaths in the period. The central attitude of survivors in all the cases was denial of the event, desire for the pathologist to report cause of death differently than suicide and the extended family feeling affected by the event in all cases (Ohayi, 2019).

Escape Theory of Suicide

The escape theory of suicide, developed by Baumeister (1990), emphasizes the roles of failure, disappointment, and setbacks in influencing suicidal behavior. According to this theory, suicidal ideation arises when individuals are overwhelmed by intense feelings of failure and negative self-awareness, prompting them to consider suicide as a solution to their problems. This perspective posits that the desire to escape these negative emotions drives individuals towards suicidal thoughts.

A series of experimental studies have confirmed the basic predictions of escape theory. Research by Chatard & Selimbegović (2011), Chatard et al. (2017), Selimbegović & Chatard (2013), and Tang et al. (2013) indicates that when individuals perceive themselves as failures or unable to achieve high performance or value, suicidal thoughts become more accessible. Additionally, the desire to escape the self can be exacerbated by self-reflection, such as seeing one's image in a mirror, bringing suicide to the forefront of consciousness. The increased accessibility of suicidal thoughts is especially pronounced when associated with negative affect.

Theoretically, escape theory implies that feelings of failure should predict suicidal ideation and that the motivation to escape self-awareness mediates the relationship between failure and suicidal ideation. It further predicts that while feelings of failure and motivation to escape are necessary for suicidal ideation, they are not sufficient for an attempt to occur. An individual must undergo a process of considering suicide and finding no alternative means of escape. This process includes self-blame, depression, cognitive deconstruction, and disinhibition.

One major limitation of escape theory is that it views failure and escape motivation as key determinants of suicidal behavior, which is also central to other contemporary theories of suicide, such as the defeat-entrapment theory and the integrated motivational volitional theory. While these frameworks have important differences, all consider failure (or defeat) and escape motivation (or entrapment) to play a central role in suicidal ideation and behavior. Additionally, escape theory's notion that suicide is the only solution to one's problems presents a limitation, as it does not account for the possibility of alternative coping mechanisms.

Application of the theory

The Escape Theory of Suicide, developed by Baumeister (1990), can be applied to understanding the nature, demographics, and frequency of suicide by emphasizing how intense feelings of failure and negative self-awareness drive individuals towards suicidal ideation. Nature-wise, the theory posits that when people experience significant setbacks or perceive themselves as failures, their desire to escape these painful emotions can lead them to consider suicide as a viable solution. Demographically, this theory helps explain why certain groups, such as those facing high performance expectations or social pressures, may be more prone to suicidal thoughts. For

instance, students or professionals who experience academic or career failures may exhibit higher suicide rates due to the intense negative affect associated with these setbacks. In terms of frequency, the theory suggests that environments that heighten self-awareness, such as competitive academic or professional settings, could lead to increased accessibility of suicidal thoughts, particularly when failures are frequent and publicly visible. Overall, the Escape Theory highlights how the interplay of failure, negative affect, and the desire to escape can significantly influence the occurrence and distribution of suicide across different populations and settings.

Research Methodo

Design of the Study

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, considered suitable for capturing the views, opinions, attitudes, and interests of respondents on a given research issue at any point in time using tools like questionnaires and interviews (Obikeze, 1990). This design is deemed appropriate for the present study as it provides a snapshot of the research population.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), a federal university in Enugu State, Nigeria. Founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1955, UNN has three campuses in Enugu State and one in Aba, Abia State. As the first full-fledged indigenous and autonomous university in Nigeria, UNN is modeled on the American educational system and is one of the most reputed universities in Nigeria, with a diverse representation of different ethnic nationalities.

Population and Sample Size

As of the 2019/2020 academic session, UNN had a student population of 48,487, with 22,336 males and 26,151 females (Academic Planning Unit UNN, 2020). The target population for this study comprised all undergraduate students at the Nsukka campus, totaling 27,917 (12,593 males and 15,324 females). Using Taro Yameni's (1967) formula, a sample size of 611 respondents was selected for the quantitative part of the study. Additionally, nine staff members were purposively selected for in-depth interviews, including deans, SERVICOM staff, and security personnel, who are well-informed about the campus dynamics and student welfare.

Sampling Technique

For this study, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the quantitative part, and a purposive sampling technique was used for the qualitative part. Multi-stage sampling involves combining different probability sampling techniques to systematically select participants.

First, the faculties at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), which naturally form clusters, were considered. Five faculties were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Each faculty name was written on a separate folded paper, placed in a transparent container, and thoroughly shaken. One folded paper was picked at a time without replacement until five faculties were selected.

Next, within each of these five selected faculties, all departments were listed, and two departments from each faculty were chosen using the same simple random technique. This process resulted in the selection of 10 departments in total. The final respondents were then selected based on availability. The researcher, assisted by research assistants, distributed 61 questionnaires in each of the 10 departments, resulting in 610 distributed questionnaires. To ensure the sample size of 611 was achieved, an additional respondent was assigned to the first department listed alphabetically among the selected ones.

For the in-depth interviews (IDIs), nine respondents were purposively selected. These included three deans of faculties, three SERVICOM staff, and three security personnel. Deans were chosen for their comprehensive knowledge of faculty happenings, SERVICOM staff for their role in overseeing student welfare and handling

complaints, and security personnel for their first-hand experience with life-threatening emergencies and suicide ideation on campus.

Instruments and Data Analysis

Data were collected using questionnaires and an in-depth interview guide (IDI). The questionnaire included structured, close-ended questions divided into two sections: socio-demographic information and views on suicide incidence in the university community. The in-depth interviews provided further probes on pertinent issues. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, with frequency tables and charts presenting the results. The IDI responses were used to complement the quantitative data, providing a richer understanding of the subject matter. Inferential statistics such as Chi-square and Spearman Correlation were used to test the study hypotheses.

Result Presentation

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

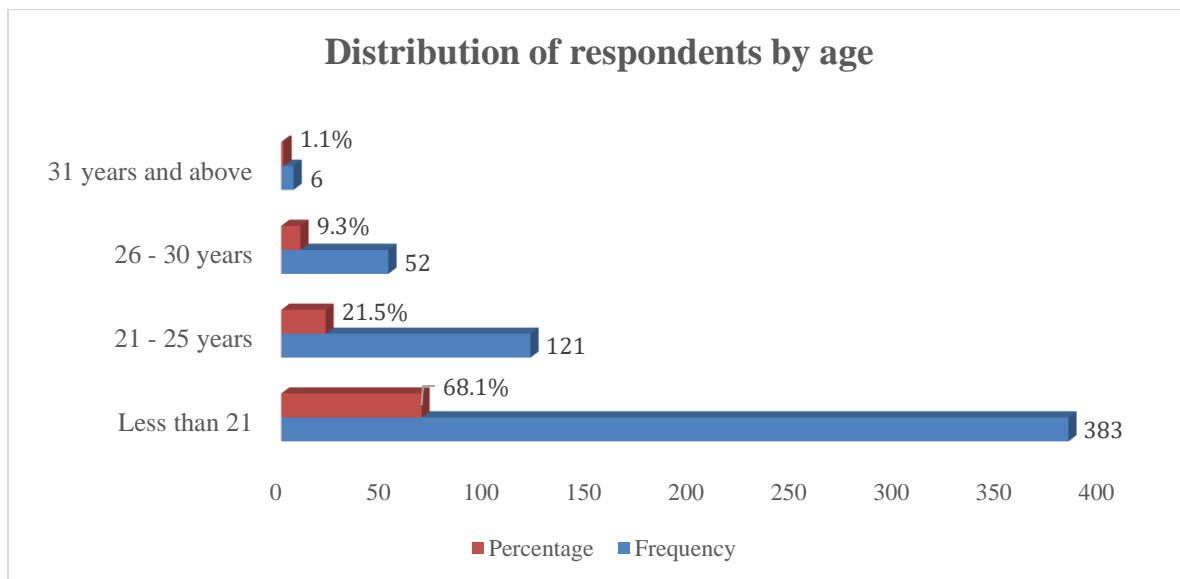


Figure 4.1.1: Distribution of respondents by age [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

Figure 4.1.1 presented information on age distribution of respondents. It showed that 1.1% of the respondents are 31 years and above, 9.3% are 26-30 years, 21.5% are 21-25 years, while 68.1% are less than 21 years old. This implies that bulk of the participants is not over 21 years old. This is also an indicator of the dominant age bracket of undergraduates in University of Nigeria, and aligned with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) benchmark for enrollment in the scheme after graduation.

Table 4.1.1: Distribution of respondents by Department

Department	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Food Science & Tech	54	9.6
Agricultural Economics	56	10.0
Computer Education	56	10.0
Business Education	56	10.0
Sociology	58	10.3
Economics	56	10.0
English and Literary Studies	56	10.0
Foreign Language	58	10.3
Industrial Chemistry	56	10.0
Microbiology	56	10.0
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.1.1 presented information on department of respondents. It showed that 9.6% of the respondents are from the Department of Food and Science Tech. Seven other Departments has percentage representation of 10% namely; Agricultural Economics, Computer Education, Business Education, Economics, English and Literary Studies, Industrial Chemistry and Microbiology. The remaining two Departments; Sociology, and Foreign Language each has 10.3% respondent representation respectively. This implies that the 10 Departments sampled had proportionate representation in the study.

Table 4.1.2: Distribution of respondents by Level of study

Level of study	Frequency	Percentages (%)
100 Level	58	10.3
200 Level	129	23.0
300 Level	299	53.2
400 - 500 Level	76	13.5
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Information on level of study of the respondents were presented in Table 4.1.2 as follows; “100 level” (10.3%), “200 level” (23%), “300 level” (53.2%), and “400-500 level” (13.5%). This implies that there were more 300 level participants in the study, and indication that majority of the participants has spent reasonable number of years in the university community and therefore vast in the happenings within the university community.

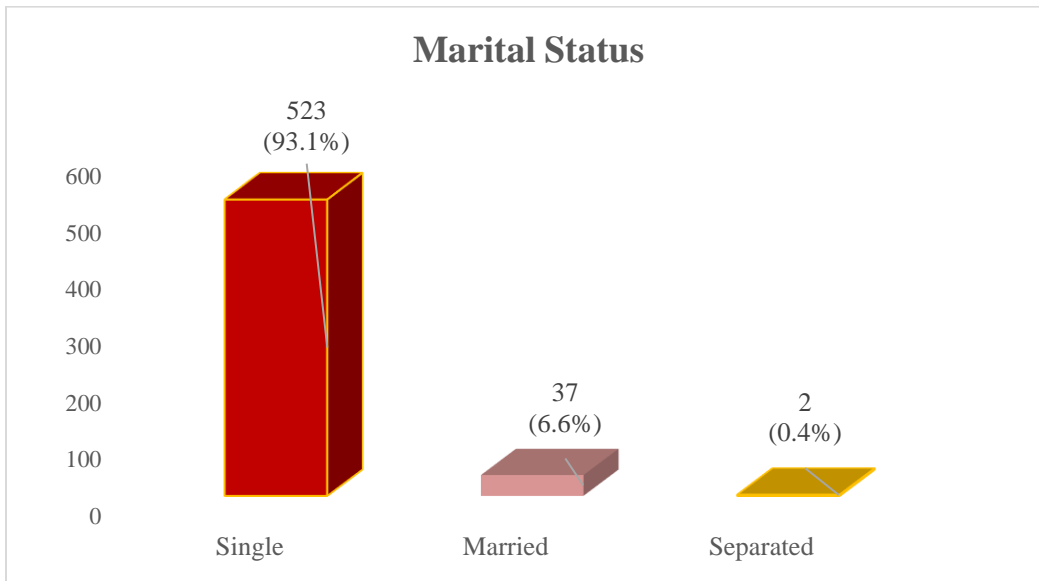


Figure 4.1.2: Distribution of respondents by marital status [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

Figure 4.1.2 showed that with regards to marital status, 93.1% of the respondents are single, 6.6% are married, while 0.4% are separated. This aligns with information presented in Figure 4.1.1 where the dominant age categories of the respondents are less than 21 years old. This implies that at least nine out of every 10 undergraduate students in University of Nigeria are single.

Table 4.1.3: Distribution of respondents by Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Christianity	538	95.7
Islam	19	3.4
African Traditional Religion	5	.9
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Information presented in Table 4.1.3 showed religious affiliation of respondents. It indicated that 95.7% of the respondents are Christians, 3.4% of the respondents are Islam, while 0.9% of the respondents are African Traditional Religion practitioners. This shows that the dormant religion amongst undergraduate students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka is Christianity.

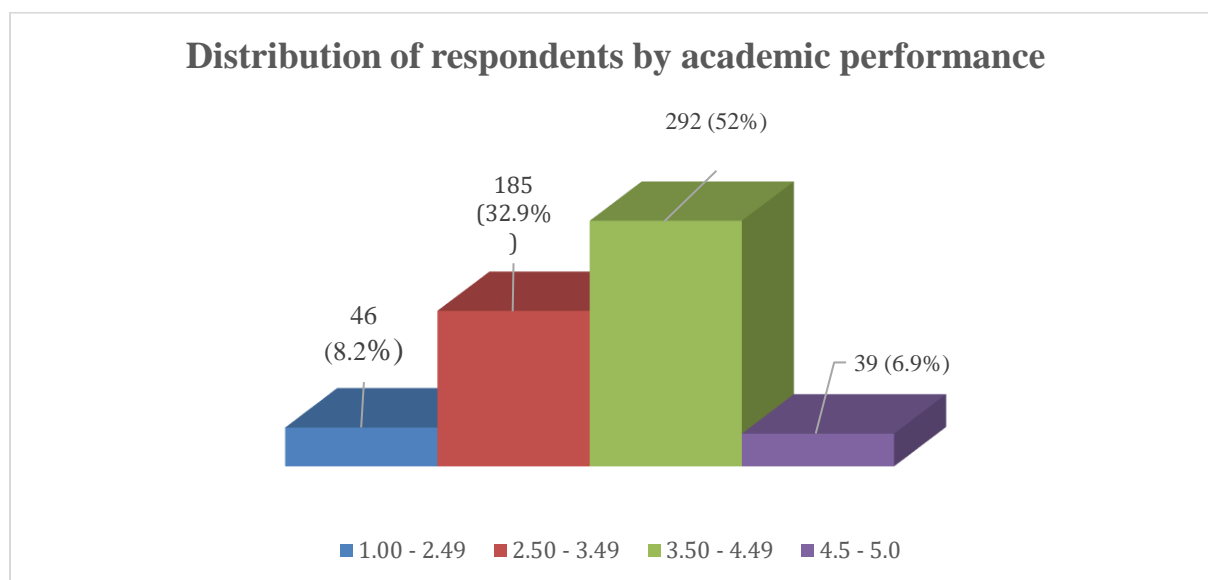


Figure 4.1.3: Distribution of respondents by Academic performance [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

On academic performance of the respondents, Figure 4.1.3 showed that 8.2% of the respondents are on 1.00-2.49 cumulative grade point (CGP), 32.9% of the respondents are on 2.50-3.49 CGP, 52% of the respondents are on 3.50-4.49 CGP, while 6.9% are on 4.50-5.00 CGP. Impliedly, a little more than half of the total respondents are within 3.50-4.49 CGP.

Table 4.2.1: Distribution of respondents by awareness on the phenomenon of suicide in university community

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Yes	550	97.9
No	12	2.1
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.1 presented information on respondents' awareness on the phenomenon of suicide in university community. It showed that while 97.9% of the respondents are aware of the phenomenon of suicide in university community, only 2.1% of the respondents are not aware of the phenomenon of suicide on campus. This implies that majority of students on campus are aware of the phenomenon of suicide on campus. This was further collaborated with responses from the interviews where all respondents are in tandem of incidents of suicide in the university community in the following excerpts:

Suicide is a well known incident in this university community and has at some point provided one of the trending national news. I can mention one of the suicide incidents that happened at Odim gate where the victim gulped some quantity of the venomous sniper insecticide [IDI, Male SERVICOM staff, 47 years old, UNN].

I am aware of various suicide incidents in the university community. Although I cannot estimate at what point at which we can say that suicide is high in the university, this because the life of our students are precious and it pains to lose any of them especially in a despicable death like suicide; however, victims of suicide are able to execute their plans within the university community once they are able to successfully isolate themselves from

friends or from social life, find a sectional place in the university and commit the act [IDI, Male Dean of Faculty, 51 years old, UNN].

Another participant who is a Chief Security Officer (CSO) in the university said:

I am aware of incidents of suicide in the university community and each time it happens, information gets to my office. I recall an incident which happened at Mohammed Babangida Auditorium, where the victim took two cans of snipper, and then phoned his friends and told them that he has done it. Probably he has been telling his friends that he would take his life but they did not consider him serious about it [IDI, Male CSO, 49 years old, UNN]

Table 4.2.2: Distribution of respondents by number of suicide ever heard [n=550]

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1 – 3	147	26.7
4 – 6	246	44.7
7 – 10	71	12.9
Above 10	86	15.7
Total	550	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 4.2.2 information presented on the number of suicide ever heard by the 97.9% of respondents on previous Table 4.2.1 indicated that 26.7% have heard of at least three suicide incidents on campus, 44.7% have heard of at least six suicide incidents on campus, 12.9% have heard of at least 10 suicide incidents on campus, while 15.7% have heard of suicide incidents to the tune of above 10 on campus. Impliedly, the phenomenon of suicide and its incidents are well known on campus.

Table 4.2.3: Distribution of respondents by knowledge of the most common method of suicide in university community

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Roping	205	36.5
Poisonous drinks	123	21.9
Falling from heights	65	11.6
Drowning	52	9.3
Drug overdose	85	15.1
Gunshots	32	5.7
Total	562	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.2.3 presented information on respondents' knowledge of the most common method of suicide in university community. It showed the following; "roping" (36.5%), "poisonous drinks" (21.9%), "falling from heights" (11.6%), "drowning" (9.3%), "drug overdose" (15.1%), "gunshots" (5.7%). This implies that roping and use of poisonous drinks are the most common methods of suicide on campus with 36.5% and 21.9% respectively. Responses gathered from participants in the interview indicated that, as against the popular opinion from the quantitative data, gulping of poisonous drink known as "Sniper" was the most preferred common method of suicide in the university community. This was gathered with interaction with the CSO in the university who told

me that a suicide victim drank two cans of Sniper; this was followed by other responses who gave incidents of Sniper intake by suicide victims in the university.

Table 4.2.4: Distribution of respondents by observed incidence of suicide in university community

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Yes	496	88.3
No	66	11.7
Total	562	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.2.4 presented information on observed incidents of suicide in university community. It showed that while 88.3% of the respondents have made observation of incidence of suicide in university community, 11.7% of the respondents indicated otherwise. This implies that suicide is a well known incidence in university community.

Table 4.2.5: Distribution of respondents by number of suicide observed [n=496]

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1 – 3	139	28.0
4 – 6	121	24.4
7 – 10	188	38.0
Above 10	48	9.6
Total	496	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.2.5 presented information on number of suicide observed. It showed the following; “1-3” (28%), “4-6” (24.4%), “7-10” (38%), “Above 10” (9.6%). This indicated a high observation rate of suicide in the university community.

Table 4.2.6: Distribution of respondents by indices of suicide ideation

Indices	Never	1-2 times	3 times and above	Total
Feeling of guilt or shame	417 (74.2%)	86 (15.3%)	59 (10.5%)	562 (100%)
Feeling of being a burden to other	71 (12.6%)	383 (68.1%)	108 (19.2%)	562 (100%)
Thoughts about personal death	267 (47.5%)	169 (30.1%)	126 (22.4%)	562 (100%)
Unbearable emotional pains	182 (32.4%)	148 (26.3%)	232 (41.3%)	562 (100%)
Extremely anxious and sad, full of rags, or agitated	23 (4.1%)	243 (43.2%)	296 (52.7%)	562 (100%)
Trapped, hopeless, empty, or that there is no reason to live	116 (20.6%)	114 (20.3%)	332 (59.1%)	562 (100%)
Severe fluctuation in mood	43 (7.7%)	71 (12.6%)	448 (79.7%)	562 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.2.6 presented information on respondents’ ratings on indices of suicide ideation. It showed the following indicators; “Feeling of guilt or shame” – never (74.2%), 1-2times (15.3%) and 3 times and above (10.5%);

“Feeling of being a burden to other” – never (12.6%), 1-2times (68.1%) and 3 times and above (19.2%); “Thoughts about personal death” – never (47.5%), 1-2times (30.1%) and 3 times and above (22.4%); “Unbearable emotional pains” – never (32.4%), 1-2times (26.3%) and 3 times and above (41.3%); “Extremely anxious and sad, full of rags, or agitated” – never (4.1%), 1-2times (43.2%) and 3 times and above (52.7%); “Trapped, hopeless, empty, or that there is no reason to live” – never (20.6%), 1-2times (20.3%) and 3 times and above (59.1%); and “severe fluctuation in mood” – never (7.7%), 1-2times (12.6%) and 3 times and above (79.7%). This implies that the last three entries in the Table, i.e. “Extremely anxious and sad, full of rage, or agitated”, “Trapped, hopeless, empty, or that there is no reason to live”, and “severe fluctuation in mood” were the most common indices of suicide ideation in the university community.

Table 4.2.7: Distribution of respondents on indices of suicidal behaviour

Indices	Never	Low	High	Total
Withdrawal from friends and family	505 (89.9%)	27 (4.8%)	30 (5.3%)	562 (100%)
Use alcohol or drugs more frequently	111 (19.8%)	380 (67.6%)	71 (12.6%)	562 (100%)
Sleep or eat more or less	58 (10.3%)	267 (47.5%)	237 (42.2%)	562 (100%)
Take dangerous risks	74 (13.2%)	189 (33.6%)	299 (53.2%)	562 (100%)
Research ways to die	291 (51.8%)	92 (16.4%)	179 (31.9%)	562 (100%)
Stockpile medications	132 (23.5%)	156 (27.8%)	274 (48.8%)	562 (100%)
Make plan for suicide	235 (41.8%)	206 (36.7%)	121 (21.5%)	562 (100%)
Make a will	81 (14.4%)	458 (81.5%)	23 (4.1%)	562 (100%)
Give away important possession or money	260 (46.3%)	225 (40%)	77 (13.7%)	562 (100%)
Say goodbye like you won't be there tomorrow	101 (18%)	155 (27.6%)	306 (54.4%)	562 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 4.2.7, indices on suicide behavior was presented as follows; “Withdrawal from friends and family” – never (89.9%), low (4.8%) and high (5.3%); “Use alcohol or drugs more frequently” – never (19.8%), low (67.6%) and high (12.6%); “Sleep or eat more or less” – never (10.3%), low (47.5%) and high (42.2%); “Take dangerous risks” – never (13.2%), low (33.6%) and high (53.2%); “Research ways to die” – never (51.8%), low (16.4%) and high (31.9%); “Stockpile medications” – never (27.8%), low (33.6%) and high (48.8%); “Make plan for suicide” – never (41.8%), low (36.7%) and high (21.5%); “Make a will” – never (14.4%), low (81.5%) and high (4.1%); “Give away important possession or money” – never (46.3%), low (40%) and high (13.7%); and “Say goodbye like you won't be there tomorrow” – never (18%), low (27.6%) and high (54.4%). Thus implies that taking dangerous risks, stockpiling medications, and say goodbye like you won't be there tomorrow are the prevalent indices of suicide behavior in university campus.

Table 4.2.8: Distribution of respondents on suicidal feeling

Factors	Not at all	Little	Often	Total
Talk about dying or desire to die	289 (53%)	188 (33.5%)	76 (13.5%)	562 (100%)
Feeling empty and hopeless	71 (12.6%)	332 (59.1%)	159 (28.3%)	562 (100%)
Strong feeling of shame and guilt	49 (8.7%)	435 (77.4%)	78 (13.9%)	562 (100%)
Social withdrawal and isolation	168 (29.9%)	219 (39%)	175 (31.1%)	562 (100%)
Feeling that there is no reason to live	353 (62.8%)	92 (16.4%)	117 (20.8%)	562 (100%)

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Information in Table 4.2.8 presented the ratings of suicidal feelings by respondents. It showed the following; “talking about dying or desire to die” – not at all (53%), little (33.5%) and often (13.5%); “feeling empty and hopeless” – not at all (12.6%), little (59.1%) and often (28.3%); “strong feeling of shame and guilt” – not at all (8.7%), little (77.4%) and often (13.9%); “social withdrawal and isolation” – not at all (29.9%), little (39%) and often (31.1%); and “feeling that there is no reason to live” – not at all (62.8%), little (16.4%) and often (20.8%). This implies that feeling of shame and guilt, and social withdrawal and isolation rank as the most suicidal feeling at least to a little extent amongst University of Nigeria students in Nsukka campus.

Table 4.2.10: Distribution of respondents’ opinion of persons more amenable to suicide

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Students from stable families	88	15.7
Students from unstable families	183	32.6
Students from rich families	222	39.5
Students from poor families	69	12.3
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

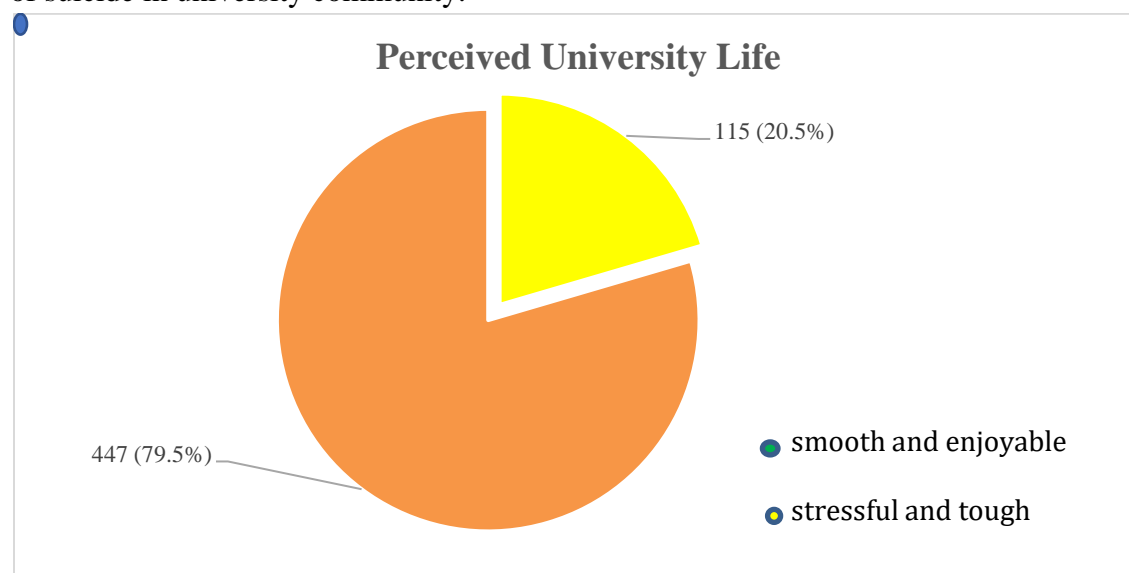
Information presented in Table 4.2.10 showed that with regards to opinions of respondents on persons more amenable to suicide, 15.7% indicated students from stable families. Other respondents were as follows; “students from unstable families” (32.6%), “students from rich families” (39.5%), and “students from poor families” (12.3%). This implies that students from rich families and students from unstable families are more amenable to suicide having the highest response of 39.5% and 32.6% respectively. Therefore, it is striking that suicide in university campus defies socio-economic status of students’ families rather the stability of the families plays significant role.

Table 4.2.15: Distribution of respondents on category of students that are most likely victim of suicide in university community

Response	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Male fresh students	64	11.4
Female fresh students	244	43.4
Male old students	191	34.0
Female old students	63	11.2
Total	562	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.15 presented information on commonest victim of suicide in university community. It showed that 11.4% of the respondents indicated male fresh students, 43.4% of the respondents indicated female fresh students, 34% of the respondents indicated male old students, while 11.2% of the respondents indicated female old students. This implies that female fresh students followed closely by male old students are opined as the commonest victim of suicide in university community.

**Figure 4.2.1: Distribution of respondents by Perceived university life** [Source: *Field Survey, 2023*]

Information on perceived university life in the university was presented in Figure 4.2.1, it showed that while 79.5% of the respondents perceive life in the university to be smooth and enjoyable, 20.5% of the respondents perceive life in the university to be stressful and tough. This means that despite the demanding nature of university requirements on the students, life in the university is very much enjoyable.

Table 4.2.18: Distribution of respondents by ratings on likely attribute of suicide

Impacts	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Witchcraft	331 (58.9%)	78 (13.9%)	153 (27.2%)	562 (100%)
Bad omen/Curse	242 (43.1%)	181 (32.2%)	139 (24.7%)	562 (100%)
Societal strain	157 (27.9%)	169 (30.1%)	236 (42%)	562 (100%)
Individualized problems	220 (39.1%)	89 (15.8%)	253 (45%)	562 (100%)

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4.2.18 presented information on respondents' ratings on likely attribute of suicide. It showed the following outcome: "witchcraft" – low (58.9%), moderate (13.9%) and high (27.2%); "bad omen/curse" – low (43.1%), moderate (32.2%) and high (24.7%); "societal strain" – low (27.9%), moderate (30.1%) and high (42%); and "individualized problems" – low (39.1%), moderate (15.8%) and high (45%). Impliedly, social strain and individualized problems ranks higher on likely attributes of suicide. In other words, students in the university community are less likely to attribute suicide to intangible phenomenon like witchcraft and bad omen/curse than to strains arising from either the individual or society.

Discussion of Findings

Nature of Suicide in Nsukka University Community:

Findings from the study indicate that suicide is well-known in the Nsukka University community, with hanging and ingestion of poisonous substances being the most common methods. This aligns with previous research by Ajdacic-Gross et al. (2008) and Offia and Obiorah (2014), who found hanging to be a predominant method of suicide globally. Additionally, extreme anxiety, severe mood fluctuations, and taking dangerous risks are common indicators of suicidal ideation and behavior on campus.

Categories of Persons More Prone to Suicide in Nsukka University Community

The study reveals that students from both wealthy and unstable families are more prone to suicide, suggesting that family stability plays a significant role rather than socio-economic status. It also highlights that female freshmen, closely followed by male senior students, are the most common victims of suicide in the university community. This vulnerability is linked to factors such as poor communication, sexual abuse, relationship breakups, and loss of a benefactor, which contribute to high emotional distress and suicidal thoughts among students.

Rate of Incidents of Suicide in Nsukka University Community:

The study suggests that while the demanding nature of university requirements, such as semester examinations and class attendance, can induce stress that may lead to suicide, the overall university life is perceived as enjoyable by many students. Despite this, a significant portion of students harbor suicidal ideation, whether consciously or subconsciously. This is consistent with studies from the United States, where 12% of freshman college students reported suicide ideation over a four-year period (Wilcox et al., 2010; Rodríguez & Huertas, 2013). The study underscores that students are less likely to attribute suicide to supernatural causes and more likely to link it to societal and personal strains, extending Durkheim's strain theory.

On the basis of the findings in this study, it is concluded that suicide is a well-known phenomenon in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Different factors namely, family, school activities, emotional issues, etc sub-merge to induce suicidal ideation into students. To this extent, whether intentionally or unintentionally, these sociocultural factors unite to subtle suicide ideation in the minds of students; although most of the students indicated that the real intention was not to end their life. This study concludes that suicide was a dangerous act for which students mostly take the route of stockpiling medications, taking poisonous substance and roping to execute. However, close associates of victims of suicide are mostly shameful of the acts of suicide arising from personal anger to social shame associated with the debilitating death of suicide.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Establishment of counseling unit faculties – it is recommended that counseling units be setup in the faculties across the universities, this will make counseling services more accessible to students and leverage on it to get relief of burden arising from varying sociocultural aspects of their life which could serve as a push towards suicide ideation.
2. Incorporating coping and problem-solving skills in university curriculum – this study recommends that problem solving skills and coping strategy be incorporated into the teaching curriculum of university education; this is to enable students to learn tangible skills towards having stable mind in the midst of several challenges towards completing their studies in the university.
3. Setting monitoring to oversee lecturers' and supervisors' activities – academic stress exerts much pressure nonstudents and the consequences can be devastating and could result to suicide, therefore, this study recommend that monitoring team be setup by university authorities to arrest any predatory or overbearing incidences that could arise from lecturers which could act as push factor towards committing suicide or harbouring it.

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